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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SARAJEVO 001028

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [BK](#)  
SUBJECT: ALLEGATIONS OF VIOLENCE STOKE BOSNIAK FEARS

Classified By: Political Counselor Michael J. Murphy. Reasons 1.4 (b),  
(d).

Summary

1. (C) Allegations of a violent attack by "masked gunmen" on Esad Buljubasic, a Bosniak resident of Srebrenica municipality, have been widely circulated in the Federation-based press along with inflammatory graphics and commentary raising links to the events of 1995. According to press reports, on May 11 over fifty residents of Ljeskovik, Buljubasic's village, abandoned their homes to take up residence in the Srebrenica tent city in Sarajevo. Inconsistencies in the report by the "victim" and subsequent investigations by the RS police strongly suggest that the incident was almost certainly fabricated. EUFOR has concluded the incident was a hoax. Nonetheless, the incident has resonated with a Bosniak population recently seized with the recent controversies in Srebrenica and Bratunac. In the meantime, the Association of Federation War Veterans, which is led by a member of Bosniak member of the Tri-Presidency Haris Silajdzic's party, has applied for permits to erect a tent city in Srebrenica. The Veterans claim they will move to Srebrenica and provide security to the municipality's Bosniaks. End Summary.

2. (U) On May 8, Esad Buljubasic, Bosniak returnee to the village of Ljeskovik in Srebrenica municipality, reported to local police that three "masked persons armed with machine guns" had assaulted him. Buljubasic said the assailants had "long beards and long hair" and told him that Ljeskovik residents would be "slaughtered in three days." Buljubasic's story changed significantly over subsequent days first alleging he had been beaten up, later claiming to have been shot, and later retracting that claim when he could not show his injuries. Buljubasic also claimed that RS police interrogated him 12 hours without any food and water when he first reported the incident.

3. (C) RS special police units mounted an investigation searching the terrain with dogs, but they did not find any evidence of the assailants. EUFOR informed OHR that it had also conducted its own parallel investigation, and concluded definitively that the allegations were false. As a result of the police investigation the Bijeljina District Prosecutor's office has stated it intends to press criminal charges against Buljubasic for filing a false report.

4. (C) In the intervening days Federation-based media, particularly SBiH-affiliated Dnawni Avaz, featured prominent coverage of the allegations including lurid stock photos from the Srebrenica era. On May 11, press reports asserted that

approximately 50 women and children from Ljeskovik for the tent settlement in Sarajevo citing fears for their safety after the incident. Though it is unclear whether 50 people left the village, it has been confirmed that some number has indeed moved out. The SBiH-affiliated Federation of War Veterans announced on May 10 that it planned to dispatch members to Ljeskovik to provide security for the residents. RS Minister of Interior Stanislav Cado contacted the High Representative to express his concern about the war veterans' threat, which he asserted would only further inflame a tense political situation and could result in a confrontation. As a result of these developments, Principal Deputy High Representative Raffi Gregorian raised the issue with President Haris Silajdzic, who promised to intervene with the War Veterans to calm tensions.

Comment

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15. (C) Commentators, including Ilijas Begic, president of the Srebrenica Intellectuals Club, have increasingly speculated that the incident was engineered by Bosniak political interests to stoke Srebrenica-related tensions after the successful compromise over the Bratunac burial and Special Envoy Bond's early, successful efforts to lower tensions over Srebrenica. Although we have no evidence of involvement by SBiH or any other political actors, the speed with which the allegations came to the attention of Federation-based media and the rapid preparations for the exodus from Ljeskovik suggest coordination between Sarajevo and Srebrenica. The "victim's" appearance, shortly afterwards with Camil Dudakovic at his Sarajevo tent camp suggests that at least Dudakovic and his group were involved in orchestrating the

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event. The resonance of the incident with the Bosniak population, and the genuine fear it has engendered among some segments, illustrates how the political climate in Bosnia has deteriorated to such an extent that even such implausible allegations are enough to provoke an emotional and destabilizing reaction. End Comment.  
MCELHANEY